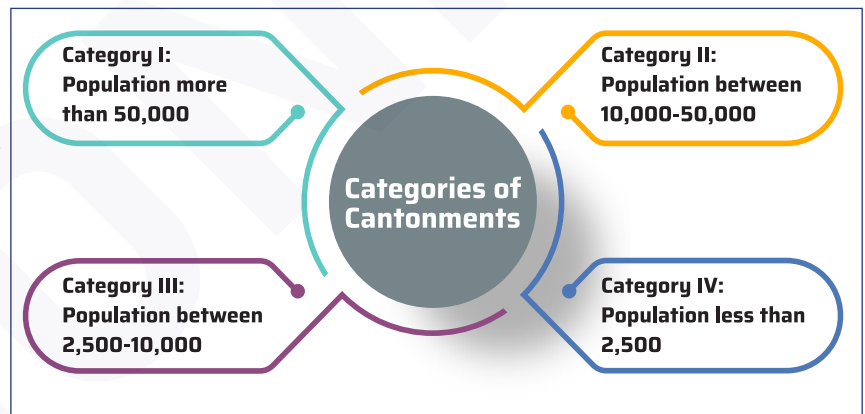## The Ministry of Defence (MoD) denotifies civil areas of 10 cantonments which will be merged with concerned state local bodies

- Earlier, in 2023, MoD had notified the state governments to consider **merging civil areas of cantonments with neighbouring state municipalities.**
  - Military areas of cantonments will be declared as **military stations** under the complete control of the army.
- **About Cantonments**
  - An **area where military troops are garrisoned** and is primarily dedicated to housing soldiers. However, civilian populations are also present.
  - **Genesis:** Established by East India Company after **the battle of Plassey in 1757.**
    - **Barrackpore (Calcutta)** was first Cantonment established in **1765.**
  - Currently there are **62 cantonments in India.**
  - **Administration:** Local self-government of the Cantonments is the **subject matter of Union Government** (Entry 3 of Union List).
    - However, **concerned State Government can implement** any scheme in Cantonment areas and such schemes are already being implemented by all State Governments.
    - Cantonments are currently administered under **the Cantonments Act, 2006** in accordance with the **74th Constitutional amendment act.**
    - Cantonments are **administered by Cantonment Boards,** which **performs civic duties** such as providing public health, water supply, primary education etc.
      - » Cantonment's **Station Commander** is Board's **ex-officio President.**
      - » Number of **elected members** varies from 2 to 8 based on their Category (refer infographic).

Categories of Cantonments

- Category I: Population more than 50,000
- Category II: Population between 10,000-50,000
- Category III: Population between 2,500-10,000
- Category IV: Population less than 2,500

Growth without basic rights is pointless: SC in Vedanta case

- The SC made this observation while upholding Vedanta's Thoothukudi copper smelting facility closure by the High Court.
  - **The state pollution control board and the state government** ordered the plant to shut down for alleged pollution in 2018.
- The SC further noted that the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties** and accords acknowledge basic rights such as breathing clean air, drinking clean water, etc. as human rights.
  - Governments and institutions all over the world **must uphold and protect these rights even as they create jobs and industry.**
- **During the judgment, SC stated the following principles:**
  - **Public trust doctrine:** It establishes that the state holds natural resources in trust for the benefit of the public.
  - **Intergenerational equity principle:** It suggests that present residents of the earth hold the earth in trust for future generations.
  - **Polluter pays principle:** It asserts that those who pollute or degrade the environment should bear the costs of mitigation and restoration.
  - **Principles of sustainable development:** It is a concept that facilitates development without depriving future generations of the ability to meet future needs.

Union Cabinet Approves IndiaAI Mission to Strengthen Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation Ecosystem

- **Aim:** Establishing a comprehensive ecosystem **that catalyzes AI innovation** through strategic programs and partnerships across the public and private sectors.
  - **It will be achieved** by democratizing computing access, providing startup risk capital, ensuring socially impactful AI projects, bolstering ethical AI, etc.
- **Implementation:** by 'IndiaAI' Independent Business Division under Digital India Corporation.
- **The mission will have the following components:**

IndiaAI Compute Capacity	One-stop solution for **resources critical for AI innovation.**
IndiaAI Innovation Centre	To undertake the development and deployment of **indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs).**
IndiaAI Datasets Platform	Will provide a one-stop solution for seamless access to **non-personal datasets for Indian startups and researchers.**
IndiaAI Application Development Initiative	Will focus on the **adoption of impactful AI solutions** for catalyzing large-scale socio-economic transformation.
IndiaAI FutureSkills	Will mitigate **barriers to entry into** AI programs.
IndiaAI Startup Financing	Supports and accelerates **deep-tech AI startups by providing funding.**
Safe & Trusted AI	Will enable the **implementation of Responsible AI projects.**

- **Significance of the mission**
  - **Drive responsible, inclusive growth** of India's AI ecosystem.
  - **Propel innovation and build domestic capacities** to ensure tech sovereignty.
  - **Create highly skilled employment opportunities** to harness the demographic dividend.
  - Demonstrating the potential of **transformative technology for good in society.**

Union cabinet approves Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme (UNNATI), 2024

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** for the **development of industries and generation of employment** in the states of the Northeast Region.
- **Objective:** To generate gainful employment, which will lead to the area's overall socio-economic development and productive economic activity in the manufacturing and service sectors.
- **Key features of the scheme**
  - **Scheme period:** 10 years along with 8 years of committed liabilities.
  - **Eligibility:** All new Industrial units and Expanding units.
    - **Maximum eligible benefits to one unit from all components:** Rs. 250 Cr.
    - Green industries like EV charging stations are on the **positive list,** while cement, plastic, and others are on the **negative list.**
  - **Districts are categorized in two zones:** Zone A (Industrially Advanced Districts) & Zone B (Industrially Backward Districts)
  - **Divided into two parts:** Part A, caters to the incentives for the eligible units, and Part B, is for implementation and institutional arrangements for the scheme.
  - **Earmarking of funds:** 60% of the outlay of Part A has been earmarked to 8 Northeastern states and 40% on First-In-First-Out basis.
  - **Implemented by:** the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** in cooperation with the states.

Other Schemes for Development in North East Region

- **PM DevINE Scheme:** For funding infrastructure and social development projects, based on felt needs of the Northeastern States.
- **NITI Forum for North East:** to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme:** to create infrastructure to ensure water supply, power connectivity, education, and health.

"Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) - Implications for Sustainability, Profitability, and Food Security", a study by NABARD

- Study assesses the ZBNF on **four crucial parameters:**
  - **Sustainable agriculture:** Naturally obtained inputs like cow dung, cow urine, leaves, etc. are sustainable alternatives to the chemical inputs.
  - **Impact on farmers' net incomes:** A study showed that net income of ZBNF farmers exceeded that of the non-ZBNF practitioners in most crops.
  - **Influence on crop productivity:** Although there have been instances of increased yield in some crops under ZBNF, traditional varieties under ZBNF can result in decline in per unit area productivity.
  - **Potential implications on national food security if scaled up:** There would be significant food shortages impacting India's self-sufficiency in foodgrains.
- ZBNF is farming with nature **without use of modern tools and technology** (like machinery, genetically modified seeds, soil testing).
  - According to it, **plants obtain 98-98.5% of nutrition from air, water, and sun,** and remaining 1.5% from the soil.
  - System, therefore, can **sustain and flourish even without nutrient supplementation.**
- **Four wheels of ZBNF (Pioneered by Subhash Palekar) include:**
  - **Beejamrit -** Microbial coating of seeds
  - **Jeevamrit -** Microbial coating of soil
  - **Waaphasa -** Soil aeration
  - **Acchadana -** Mulching - applying layer of organic material to soil surface
- Union Government implements ZBNF as **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati (BPKP),** a sub-scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

Recommendations:
- Need for a **long-term experimentation** before suggesting ZBNF as a national level agriculture practice.
- **Farming practice neutrality:** By providing **direct benefit transfers (DBT),** the subsidy becomes neutral towards specific farming practices.
- **Resilient supply chain networks** for farm inputs are a prerequisite to transitioning towards natural farming.

Ministry of Coal releases "Strategy Paper on Coal Import Substitution"

- This has been prepared by the **Inter-Ministerial Committee,** constituted by the Ministry for making recommendations on **import substitution of coal by 2030.**
- **Key observations:**
  - Despite having **rich coal deposits** (around **378.20 billion tonnes**), India is **second largest importer** of coal, importing **237 MT in FY2023 costing ₹3.83 Lakh Crores.**
    - Coal is **majorly consumed for electricity generation** in India (about 64%), followed by **steel** and cement sectors.
  - **Energy consumption matrix:** Coal dominates and accounts for **56% of primary energy consumption.**
    - Accounts for **76% of electricity generation** and will remain major fuel with **55% share by FY2030.**
  - **Factors behind Coal import:**
    - **Smaller and lower quality** reserves of coking coal.
    - Less availability of **high gross calorific value coal.**
    - **Challenges in developing new coal mines** related to land acquisition, delay in obtaining statutory clearance etc.
    - **Logistics constraints** for evacuation.
- **Recommendations:**
  - Implementation of **Coal Logistic Plan as high priority.**
  - **Utilization of raw coking coal production** and adoption of **Stamp Charging battery technology** in steel sector.
  - **Enhancing Washing Capacity** in India to 140 MT by 2030.
  - **Enhancing coal gasification** based Direct Reduced Iron for steel making.
  - **Rationalization of GST Compensation Cess** on coal.

Government measures for coal import substitution
- **Vision 2030:** Increase in Coal and lignite production.
- Auction and operationalisation of more **commercial/captive coal blocks.**
- **Coal Logistic Policy** and **coal evacuation plan** for efficient evacuation of coal.
- **Mission Coking coal** for production and utilization of domestic coking coal.
- **Technology Upgradation** with coal sector digitalization, smart dashboard, remote sensing application etc.

Also in News

Corbett Tiger Reserve

- Supreme Court has directed to constitute a committee to assess the **damage caused in the Corbett Tiger Reserve due to Tiger Safaris.**
- **About Corbett Tiger Reserve.**
  - Located on **foothills of Himalayas** in **Uttarakhand** and spread over **Bhabar and lower Shivalik region.**
  - **First national park** to be established in mainland Asia.
  - Declared as an **'Important Bird Area' (IBA)** by Birdlife International.
  - **Rivers flowing through it:** Ramganga, Pallaen and Sonanadi.
  - Local grasslands known as **Chaur.**
  - **Vegetation type:** Tropical dry and moist deciduous forest.
  - **Fauna:** Tiger (**highest tiger density**), elephant, leopard, sambar, hog deer etc.

Shankaracharya Temple

- PM has offered his reverence to the Shankaracharya Hill on his recent visit to Kashmir.
  - The hill located in the **Zabarwan Range,** houses the Shankaracharya Temple.
- **About the Temple**
  - The temple is **dedicated to Lord Shiva** and is located at a height of 1100 feet.
  - It is considered as the **oldest shrine for worship in Kashmir valley.**
  - The temple got its name from the visit of the philosopher and saint **Adi Shankaracharya.**
    - He propounded the **Doctrine of Advaita**.
    - **He established the four maths** namely Dwarka, Joshimath, Puri, and Sringeri.

Technology Development Board (TDB)

- TDB has entered into an agreement with a private company for **Advanced Chemical Manufacturing Facility.**
- **About TDB**
  - **Genesis: A statutory body** under the Technology Development Board Act, 1995.
  - **Ministry:** Ministry of Science and Technology.
  - **Objective:** commercializing the results of indigenous research.
  - **Functions:**
    - Provides equity capital or loans to industrial concerns and financial assistance to research and development institutions.
    - Facilitates interaction between industry, scientists, technocrats, and specialists.

PM Ujjwala Yojana

- Union Cabinet approves continuation of **targeted subsidy of Rs.300 per LPG cylinder** for up to 12 refills per year under **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** during **FY 2024-25.**
- **PM Ujjwala Yojana**
  - **Launched in 2016 with the objective** to provide **clean cooking fuel to rural and deprived households** which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels.
    - Government targets **10.35 crore LPG connections** under the scheme.
  - **Ministry:** Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
  - **Eligible beneficiary:** An **adult woman** belonging to poor household and not having LPG connection.
  - Government provides **financial support of Rs. 1600** for each LPG connection.

ChipIN Centre

- ChipIN centre aims to provide state-of-the-art **Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools** to around 85,000 students to design Semiconductor Chips.
- **ChipIN Centre**
  - The Centre has been **set up by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology at C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).**
  - It is a **centralized design facility,** hosting most **advanced tools** for entire chip design cycle and provide **aggregate services for fabrication** of design.
  - It aims to bring the **chip design infrastructure at door-steps of the semiconductor design community.**

Frontier Technology Labs (FTLs)

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, and Meta** have announced the launch of FTLs.
- **About FTLs**
  - **Aim:** to empower students to innovate using technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Augmented & Virtual Reality, Blockchain, etc.
  - It is **an advanced version of the Atal Tinkering Lab,** equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure.
  - It will be **funded by Meta,** and Atal Innovation Mission will be the knowledge partner.
  - These labs will be managed by **Meta's partner 1M1B (One Million for One Billion).**

'NITI for States' Platform

- Government has launched the **'NITI for States' platform.**
  - It is a **comprehensive digital initiative** designed to empower States/UTs in their pursuit of national development goals.
- **Key Features of Platform:**
  - It offers a **centralised repository of valuable resources,** including best practices, policy documents, datasets, and NITI Aayog publications.
  - **Multilingual:** It will be available in **22 major Indian languages** and 7 foreign languages.
  - **Capacity Building:** Tailored digital training modules for officials at various levels (block, district, and state).
  - **Expert Help:** Specialized guidance through partnerships with leading institutions to address specific challenges.

Orans land

- Communities, particularly those in western Rajasthan, are concerned about the state's proposal to classify **orans (sacred groves) as deemed forests.**
- A sacred grove comprises patches of **natural vegetation ranging from a few trees to several acres** that are dedicated to local deities or tree spirits.
- **Deemed Forest**
  - The concept of deemed forests has **not been clearly defined** in any forest law.
  - In the **Godavarman Thirumalpad (1996) case,** SC brought in the concept of **'deemed forests;'.**
    - It means an area that wasn't officially classified as forest by the government but looked like it.

Places in News

Indonesia (Capital: Jakarta)

- RBI and Bank Indonesia signed MoU to **promote use of local currencies in bilateral transactions.**
- **Political Boundaries:**
  - A **Southeast Asian** country, located on **equator,** and largest archipelagic country.
  - **Land Borders:** Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and East Timor
  - **Maritime Borders:** Singapore, Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, Thailand and India.
  - **Water Bodies:** South China Sea and Pacific Ocean (North), and Indian Ocean (South).
- **Geographical Features:**
  - **Five main islands:** Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua.
  - **Major Rivers:** Mahakam, Barito
  - **Highest Peak:** Puncak Jaya
  - It lies on **Pacific Ring of Fire.**

AHMEDABAD BENGALURU BHOPAL CHANDIGARH DELHI GUWAHATI HYDERABAD JAIPUR JODHPUR LUCKNOW PRAYAGRAJ PUNE RANCHI